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Declassified and
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MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Chile/Prospects for Political Action to Deny
Salvador Allende the Presidency

1. INTRODUCTION

a. On 4 September 1970 Marxist Salvador Allende, candidate of the Popular Unity (UP - a coalition of Communist/Socialist and other leftists), won a 40,000 vote victory over Jorge Alessandri, an independent running with conservative support. Because neither candidate received a majority of the votes cast, the Chilean congress will sit in joint session on 24 October 1970 to select the next president of Chile.

b. This memorandum describes the current political and military situation and possible courses of actions to try to deny Allende the presidency.

2. BACKGROUND

[REDACTED]

This political action basically was an anti-Allende and anti-UP propaganda campaign, with no direct support being provided to either of the two non-Marxist candidates.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Committee was briefed orally on the Chilean electoral situation on 7 August.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It was agreed that the Committee would have to consider separately any requests for authority to influence the congressional vote. A paper entitled "Options in Chilean Presidential Election During

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SECRET

- 2 -

the Congressional Run-Off Phase (5 September - 24 October)" was circulated to members of the 40 Committee on 31 August 1970. This paper outlined electoral situations and options which might be considered in advance of the election.

3. PRESENT ELECTORAL SITUATION

a. Allende received the plurality of the votes cast on 4 September and, as a result, is favored to be selected as the next president by the Congress. The tradition in Chile has been that the runner-up concedes and the Congress formally selects the front-runner in the popular vote, in this case Allende. Alessandri has agreed privately to avoid any gesture of cession or of recognition of Allende as president-elect.

b. It must now be assumed that the 82 votes held by the UP in Congress are fairly solid, despite the fact that in the past it was believed that some of the 29 votes belonging to the Radical Party might switch to Alessandri if he were the front-runner. Thus, Allende apparently needs only 19 votes from the bloc of 75 PDC votes to obtain a majority in Congress. Before the election President Frei believed that at least 18 PDC Congressmen would vote for Allende in a congressional run-off if Alessandri were to receive the plurality. It must now be assumed that these same 18, and possibly additional PDC Congressmen, would be even more favorably disposed toward Allende. On 7 September the Ambassador said "that the PDC is ready to rationalize; Allende and the Communists are already diligently mending fences with the Christian Democrats of whom there are many only too anxious to enter that kind of transaction." Against this background we cannot speculate as to how the voting would go other than to note that Allende certainly has the open path in Congress.

c. As far as the Chilean military is concerned, it was believed prior to the election that they were not predisposed to take action to deny Allende the presidency. This position stemmed from reports from senior military leaders that they would respect the constitution as well as the decision of the electorate and/or the Congress. However, since the election there has been a discernible change of mood among the officers. They are much perturbed,

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SECRET

- 3 -

much more combative in spirit now that Allende has achieved a plurality in the popular vote. This new mood is evidenced by the actions of General Valenzuela who informed the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Apparently, Valenzuela asked and received their support for a plan whereby constitutional processes would be followed in a series of maneuvers designed to result in new elections being held between Frei and Allende. Valenzuela's scenario is that the PDC and the National Party would make a deal to elect Alessandri on 24 October with the armed forces in position in Santiago providing protection; and, Alessandri would then accept the nomination, form a military cabinet, and resign forthwith on 4 November. Finally, new elections which they expect that Frei would win would be held within 60 days. Valenzuela requested that the [REDACTED] inform the Ambassador of the foregoing and try to ascertain the Ambassador's reaction

[REDACTED] Valenzuela also asked that the Ambassador use his influence with Frei to gain acceptance of the plan. At the Ambassador's instruction, the [REDACTED] promptly informed Valenzuela that the Ambassador was very satisfied with the knowledge that the Armed Forces of Chile shared the Ambassador's conviction of what would be the consequences of an Allende presidency for the Chilean Armed Forces and the country itself. Valenzuela was also told that the Ambassador found it encouraging that "Chilean Armed Forces had begun the process of planning the location in Santiago before the 24th of October of units effectively prepared to control the situation and to maintain law, order and respect for the traditional Chilean democratic liberties." Valenzuela was informed in addition that the Ambassador had known about the constitutional possibilities, but that he wished to point out that in the remaining 48 days before the congressional run-off Frei would be subject to many pressures from those sharing Valenzuela's views and from those opposed. The Ambassador also noted that he was convinced that Chileans, particularly those who represented so professional and so respected an armed force, could find a correct and democratic solution for a problem that signified so much in terms of Chile's future and that of the hemisphere. On 7 September the Ambassador's general assessment of this situation was "the

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- 4 -

military unless given some sound advice is capable of depending only on the President and that is a very weak reed indeed."

4. POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION

a. The courses of action open to the USG are conditioned by two basic (but essentially as yet unknown) factors: (a) the degree to which the Chileans themselves are willing to take action in the political and/or military realm to deny Allende the presidency and (b) the degree to which Allende is accorded recognition prior to the congressional run-off as the de facto president by local opinion as well as by other countries in and out of the hemisphere. Essentially, political action through the Chilean Congress or the Chilean military (or, possibly, some combination of the two) holds the only remaining prospects for preventing an Allende election in the congressional run-off. At this moment, the backing and cooperation of President Frei would seem almost indispensable to any prospect for denying Allende the presidency in favor of Alessandri in the congressional run-off because the vast majority of the PDC congressional bloc would need to be persuaded to support Alessandri (he needs to add 58 votes to the 43 he reportedly now has) in the face of tradition, of the temptation to make a "deal" with Allende forces, and, perhaps, in face of the conviction that Allende is the better man. Similarly, President Frei's residual authority and prestige would seem to be required in one form or another in order to motivate and move the military to some type of action calculated to take over the government on an interim basis or otherwise deny Allende the presidency prior to the congressional run-off. At the very least, President Frei's benevolent neutrality would be a condition precedent to any prospect for military action, be it self-generated or induced by a coalition of conservative/Alessandrista forces. At this particular time, none of the essential factors in any of these possible formulas has become sufficiently clear in the shock of the aftermath of the election to be able to predict probability, chances of success, and risks. Assessments prior to Allende's winning of a plurality at the polls certainly did not hold forth much hope for any of the foregoing measures under present conditions; however, the excellent prospects for Allende becoming president may be traumatic enough to change comfortable positions held prior to the elections

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S E C R E T

- 5 -

and induce a more action-prone attitude in key political and military quarters.

(1) Congressional Political Action

Political action to deny Allende the presidency in the congressional run-off is a very dim prospect at this particular time but may not yet be hopeless if the proper Chilean initiatives and ingredients are present. The key to any political action program is the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and President Frei is the only man in Chile who has the motivation and possible influence to hold the PDC congressional votes together for delivery to Alessandri. Frei realizes the magnitude of this task and, because it may be insurmountable, may not be willing to undertake it.

(2) Military Political Action

The fact that high-level military leaders are at least discussing possible courses of action as described previously is an encouraging sign in this situation. Valenzuela's plan is a military solution which involves most of the senior military officers of Chile and as such is worthy of serious consideration as one possible action for the USG to encourage or support.

(3) Propaganda

[REDACTED] However, their effectiveness and mobility might be impaired by threats from the Allende supporters. This is especially true if the propaganda employed violates Chilean laws.

5. CONSIDERATIONS

a. Any political action undertaken to deny Allende the presidency must be tied to or complement Chilean initiatives.

b. Successful military or political action could set the stage for a serious confrontation between Allende's

S E C R E T

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- 6 -

supporters and the Armed Forces which could lead to bloodshed.

c. Political action designed to thwart the victory of a legally elected candidate [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] If the USG's role in such an activity were exposed, it could seriously damage US prestige and credibility both in Chile and elsewhere in the hemisphere.

d. In the event the political action is unsuccessful and the US efforts become known, it might make it much more difficult, if not impossible, for the US to work out a modus vivendi with the Allende administration or to try to moderate an Allende Government through diplomatic means.

6. RISKS

a. [REDACTED]

b. [REDACTED]

c. [REDACTED]

d. [REDACTED]

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- 7 -

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7. In summary, the Ambassador has expressed his profound conviction that if an Allende victory is to be denied then prompt action will be required. On 7 September the Ambassador requested that [REDACTED] be set aside now pending further study of the most effective use of these funds and subject to submission of plans for their use.

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